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LCWR president: New pope should work with sisters

Joshua J. McElwee | Feb. 14, 2013 NCR Today
Benedict Resigns

Whoever is elected to replace Pope Benedict XVI as head of the Roman Catholic Church should be "open to dialogue" with U.S. Catholic sisters, one of the sisters' primary leaders says.

Franciscan Sr. Florence Deacon, president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), an organization of U.S. sisters, said the new pope should instead work "with us to support our mission."

Deacon is quoted in an article [1] posted Wednesday at The Daily Beast.

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith sharply rebuked LCWR [2], which represents about 80 percent of U.S. women religious, in April 2012. LCWR was ordered to revise and place itself under the authority of three U.S. bishops.

The group has said the Vatican's critiques were unsubstantiated. Following announcement of the move, it received wide shows of support from U.S. laypeople, other organizations of religious men and women, and even members of Congress.

"We found the whole process of the investigation flawed and question the findings and the mandate given to LCWR," Deacon told The Daily Beast.

"We hope a new pope would be open to dialogue with the U.S. Catholic sisters and work with us to support our mission," she said.

Deacon's hopes for a new pope, taken from The Daily Beast article:

- "I would like a pope who has had direct experience working with a diversity of people and who understands the joys and challenges of ordinary Catholics trying to live the Gospel in the midst of chaotic family lives and stressful job situations."
- "I'd like one who is able to integrate church teaching and advances in science, psychology, anthropology ... and who strives for understanding and acceptance of all persons."
- "I'd like someone attuned to the voices of young people, especially young women who are leaving the church in the U.S. in large numbers because they don't feel valued."

Deacon also gave advice to the cardinals who will be meeting in conclave to elect the new pontiff.

"Recall the sense of excitement with which each session of the Second Vatican Council was received," she said. "Vote for someone who can capture that spirit, who sees the church as being more than its leadership, but includes the whole body of its members."

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[1] http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/02/13/american-nuns-hope-for-sister-friendly-new-pope.html
[2] http://ncronline.org/node/29834